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LOCAL NEWS | BOOTS AND BOOKS LUNCHEON

Authors speak to luncheon audience at Boots & Books event in Abilene



Janet Van Vleet/Reporter-News Leila Meacham, left, receives the A.C. Greene Award from West Texas Book Festival chairman Glenn Dromgoole,

By Janet Van Vleet of the Abilene Reporter News

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Hundreds gathered to enjoy barbecue and celebrate literacy Saturday at the annual Boots & Books Luncheon, the final event of the West Texas Book Festival.

The weeklong book festival coordinated by the Friends of the

Abilene Public Library features authors, book signings and other happenings.

Texas author Leila Meacham received the A.C. Greene Award, presented to a distinguished Texas author for lifetime achievement.

She thanked the Friends for choosing her for the honor and said she felt deeply privileged.

Meacham said her right to call herself a Texan has been called into question as she spent the first three weeks of her life east of the Sabine River. Her mother, carrying twins, could not make it back home in time for Meacham and her brother to be born in Texas.

"I say, 'Phooey!'" she exclaimed. "I didn't smile until I was on Texas soil. I am a Texan."

She told the audience she had written her first romance novel when she was 40 and ended up signing a three-book contract. The experience was such a poor one, she stopped writing entirely. But 25 years later, she started writing again and wrote four Texas epics — more than 600 pages each — in six years.

Setting the books in Texas offered "excellent fiber for fiction."

Alyssa Crow, the children's librarian at the south branch of the Abilene Public Library, was named the Ricki Brown Librarian of the Year.

Surprised and ecstatically happy, Crow repeated, "Thank you, thank you, thank you" over and over again. She thanked the person who nominated her for the award and said, "Good job."

Carlton Stowers, a contributing writer to "West Texas Stories," which features many local authors, spoke about his childhood entrepreneurial spirit when he collected horned toads and shipped them to a curio shop in Topeka, Kansas. He used the money, 10 cents

per toad, to pay the 9 cents to go to the movies on Saturday afternoons in Ballinger.

Festival chairman Glenn Dromgoole and author Joe Specht led the crowd in a chorus of "Abilene" before Stowers spoke. The song includes the line about Abilene that "the women there don't treat you mean."

Stowers had his own opinion on that.

"That songwriter didn't know some of the women I knew growing up," said the Abilene High School alum.

About Janet Van Vleet

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